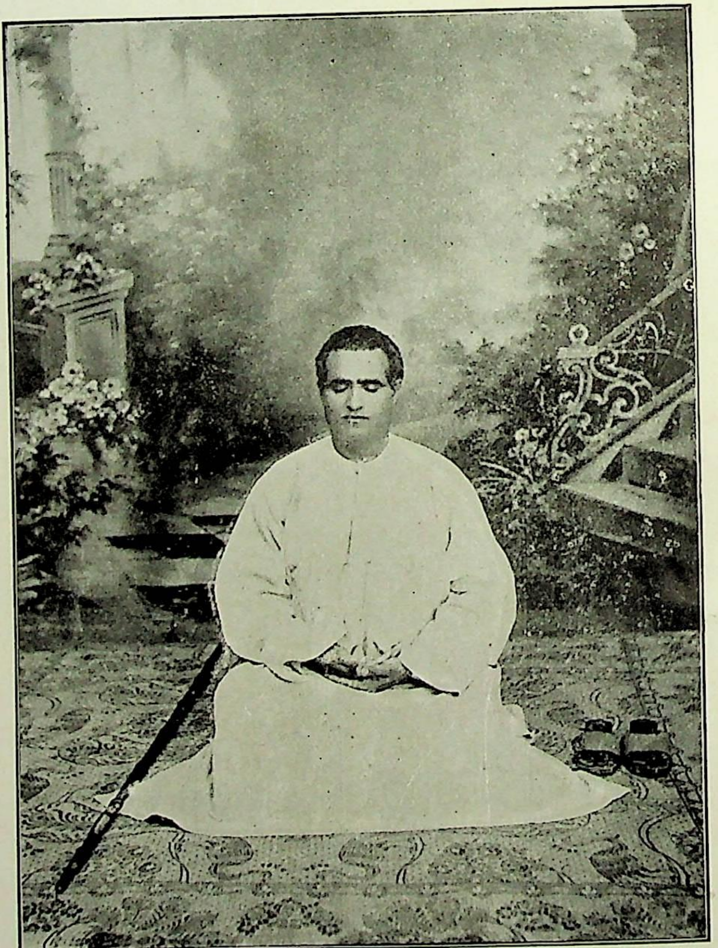


SWAMI SATYADEV.

My Experiences in America

(PART I)

BY

SWAMI SATYADEVA PARIVRAJAKA.

TRANSLATED FROM HINDI

BY

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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.

Swami Satyadev needs, I hope, no introduction to any Indian readers. His name must be familiar to them all, as he is a sturdy nationalist of established repute. But, those who have not studied his writings in Hindi are not likely to be familiar with his antecedents. He received his early education in Benares, living on charities. Then he conceived the bold idea of going out to America for study, and started with only Rs. 15 in his pocket! Undergoing all sorts of difficulties, he at length reached America, where he stayed from 1906 to 1911, studying in the Chicago, Oregon, and Washington Universities, and paying his way by manual labour. As he had gone to America by way of Japan and the Philippines, he resolved to return by way of Europe. So he started from Washington, and traversed the states of Oregon, California, Arizona, New Mexico, on foot; thence he proceeded to New York by railway, passing through Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Missouri, Indiana, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. From New York

he went to Manchester as a labourer in a cattle-steamer, and thence home to India, *via* France and Italy, thus completing the circuit. Needless to say, he had travelled with his eyes wide open, and came home with a mass of most valuable information, gathered at first hand. Soon afterwards, he began to publish a series of books in Hindi, describing his experiences in his characteristically simple and vigorous style, with a view to rousing his country-men to a sense of their immense possibilities. These books have been sold in their thousands, and have done not a little to create the new spirit of nationalism in the Hindi-speaking provinces of India. None who reads his works can fail to be deeply impressed with his sanity, his rare courage and independence of conviction, his wide outlook, the singular purity and nobility of his character, and his fervent devotion to his motherland.

In 1915, Swamiji performed the daring feat of going on a pilgrimage to Mount Kailash on the Tibetan side of the Himalayas, alone. He stayed at Madras for one year, for organising the Hindi propaganda work in our Presidency. He started an Ashram in Allahabad with a view to training up young men for national ;service, but it had to be dropped for want of support. He has taken a vow

of Brahmacharya for life, as he thinks it would be a sin to breed "slaves." He is now engaged in active political propaganda, although his many great schemes have been sadly frustrated by the almost complete failure of his eye-sight.

The present volume contains the translation of the *America-Digdarshan*, a collection of articles which originally appeared in the journals, *Saraswati* and *Maryada*.

In conclusion, I beg most respectfully to thank Swami Satyadev for the kind permission which he has given me to translate all his Hindi books into English.

A. RAMA IYER.

My sincere thanks are due to *The Manager Satya-Grantha-Mala Office, Farrukhabad*, for kindly lending me the use of the block of Swamy Satyadev's portrait.

A. R.

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I

My First Night in Chicago.

The second of June 1906 marks a turning-point in my life. For, that was the day on which I set foot into the great city of Chicago. Was it not a wonderful thing that one like myself who had undergone his early education in the ancient Indian city of Benares, and who had absolutely no knowledge of the outside world, should have all at once found himself in this mighty city of America, without any letters of introduction, and with no idea of where to go or what to do? I had not gone into a hotel till now; I knew not how to handle the knife and fork, or how to conduct myself in addressing strangers.

It was 10 o'clock when I reached Chicago from Vancouver,—a distance of some 2,800 miles. When the train reached the station, and cries of "Chicago" fell on my ears, I knew it was time for me to alight. All the passengers got down and went their ways. I asked myself, "Where shall I go?" At last, I took my trunk and alighted from the train. Handing over my ticket, I came outside, when I was accosted by a *gharriwallah*, and asked

where I wanted to go. What could I say, who knew not even the name of a place to go to? After some reflection, I bethought myself of the Y.M.C.A. It is only when we come abroad that we discover the merits of these Christian associations, and the excellent work which they are doing. Here, young men learn to serve their country and fellow-men in various capacities; if any strangers come, they render them all kinds of aid. What a contrast between these and the religious associations of our own country, whose time is spent in idle disputations and in defamatory controversies!

Seating myself in the carriage, I cast my eyes about me. All the men and women who were passing to and fro, were so neat and tidy, in their fresh, unsoiled clothes, and with their hairs neatly dressed. On account of my four days' continuous travel, my clothes, especially the trousers, had become awfully dirty. All my fresh clothes were in my big box which I had put into the Goods train, and consequently I had perforce to go in my soiled dress. At every moment I was casting my eyes at [my dirty clothes, and contrasting my appearance with that of the passers-by. By this time the carriage came up to the Y.M.C.A., and the driver opened the door. A boy, who was waiting

there, at once ran up to take my things, but when he noticed my dirty clothes and beard of four days' growth, he shrank back, and I could notice a derisive smile on his face. I lifted up my trunk, and went up to the big building in front of me. The office of the Y.M.C.A. was situated on the second floor. When I entered, a young man took me to the Secretary, who received me most courteously, and advised me to go to some hotel. I thought it would be best if I could secure the address of some Japanese student. The Secretary telephoned to some places, but could get no information. As the address of the Mahabodhi Society's office was known to me, I decided to go there, and find out the whereabouts of some Japanese student. And so, leaving my trunk at the Y.M.C.A., I set out in search of the Mahabodhi Society.

The sight that met my eyes on the road was wonderful. Men and women were hurrying hither and thither, They were all most neatly dressed, and happy, and busy as the bees. It was a scene of unresting activity; none seemed inclined to pause, much less idle away their time. Even the little boys and girls were hurrying about as if driven by a mighty force. On one side, the news-boys were selling the "Daily News", the "Record

Herald" and other papers. The Electric Cars' crowded to their fullest capacity, were rushing to and fro; and carts filled with goods of all kinds were going past. While above, another road was to be seen at a height of 40 yards from the ground, supported by mighty iron posts, and over it also were Elevator Cars rushing incessantly to and fro.

On the way I came across the building of the Masonic Temple. It was a sky-scraper of 22 stories, and it gave me for the first time some idea of the marvels of modern science.

I enquired of a policeman the way to the Mahabodhi Society, and hastened in the direction he pointed out. But, Chicago is the third city of the world, with streets which are 20 miles long, and one even 27 miles; so that, it took me some two hours to reach my destination. The fatigue was mitigated by the beautiful sights on the road, especially the world-famous shop of Marshal Field. What a shop! I was struck with wonder to see the rows of goods presented for sale, and was tempted to step in and feast my eyes to their fill, but, as it was getting late and I had to find a place for my night's rest, I had to hurry on.

At length I reached the Society's building, and learnt that the office was on the tenth floor. What

an excellent device for going up! The electric lift or elevator is always ready, on which some ten persons can stand at a time. You stand on it, and give the man in charge the number of the floor that you want to go to. In a trice you find yourself there, and you may go to the particular room on that floor that you are in search of. In every building you have three or four such elevators for taking people up and down. Wherever you go the maximum of work in the minimum of time!

On enquiry at the tenth floor, I learnt that the Society's office had been shifted to some other place. A kind lady gave me the new address, and I thought of going again in search of it. By continuous wandering from 11 to 3, I had become quite exhausted, not to mention the fact that, during the four days of my journey from Vancouver to Chicago, I had subsisted on a mere handful of gram! The Dining Car attached to the train was of no use to me, as I had a rooted aversion to meat and liquor. Hence my four days in the train had been spent on an empty stomach, and even after reaching Chicago, I had not had any food or drink. and, what was more, I had been incessantly wandering about for full four hours. No wonder, then, that I was now reduced to the last degree of exhaustion. And yet, it was indispensable that I should find out the

Mahabodhi Society's quarters, and so I set out once more.

On my way I found the notices and the name-boards of several small hotels. I thought to myself why I should not spend the night in one of these hotels, and go:to the University early in the morning to learn the address of a Japanese student. And so, I went up to a restaurant, and presented myself before the landlord. He took down my name, and directed me to a room. But, somehow, I felt that things there were not what they should be, and quietly escaped to the street outside. I learnt afterwards that it was a resort of evil characters, and that the poor travellers who lodged there used to be robbed, their pockets being picked when they were sound asleep. In the morning the landlord exacts his due, and the unfortunate traveller goes his way, pocketing his loss !

Well, in an hour more I arrived at the Mahabodhi Society's office. The gentleman there received me most cordially, and heard all my story ; then, he prepared to take me along to some good hotel, and arrange for my stay during the night. So we took the tram for the Thompson Hotel. On the way I saw the mighty building of the Chicago Post Office.

The proprietor of the Thompson Hotel, seeing my dirty clothes and knowing me to be a foreigner, refused to take me in. So, my companion and myself went to another hotel, where, with some difficulty, I was admitted for two nights for Rs 6. Having made the necessary arrangements, my companion left me. I was taken to the fourth floor by a servant, and shown into a well-furnished room.

When I was left alone in my room, I fastened the door from within, and heartily thanked God that I had at length found a place to rest in for the night. My mind was still agitated over the clothes-problem. My clothes were all so dirty, and how could I secure a change? I looked round, and saw that soap was ready placed for me. I then decided to wash my soiled clothes clean, lest I should not get my luggage the next day. There were taps of cold and hot water in the room, and I washed my clothes thoroughly well, till it was 10 P.M. Next I shaved myself, and so felt easy at heart about appearing in public on the morrow. Then, hungryand tired, I laid myself down on the spotlessly clean bed, and was straightway wrapped in sleep.

II

Sunday in Chicago.

Chicago is one of the very greatest cities in the whole world. Here is the great University founded by the world-famous millionaire, John D. Rockfeller. Some of the greatest mills and factories of America are here, where work labourers of all nationalities. How do the inhabitants of such a mighty city spend their holidays? What are their diversions and amusements? What are the objects specially worth seeing in this place? We will give some account of these things in this chapter. We will take you round the city, and show you some of its best sights. We will also give you an idea of the life of the people here. We have, for this purpose, chosen Sunday of all the days of the week, as it is only on that day that the people are free to enjoy themselves.

Sunday is a holiday, as even little children in our country know. It is true that in India, all schools and offices are closed on that day, but none but those who have lived among Christian peoples